SARON NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Senior Choir Director,
Bell Choir Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com
Irma Gorman, Organist
Margaret Froehlich, Administrative
Assistant
Megan Savage, Financial Secretary
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org
Emily Gaul, Child Care

Typical Sunday Schedule at Saron:
During the School Year:
8:30 & 11:00 A.M. Worship
Childcare provided
9:40 Learning for Ages 2 – Adult

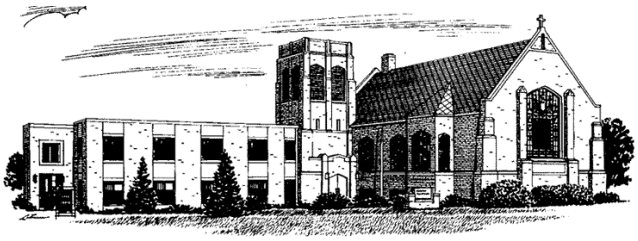
Summers (thru Labor Day weekend):
9:30 Holy Communion
Childcare provided
No Learning Hour

During the present Pandemic:
11:00 a.m. via Zoom
All are welcome!

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia

Saron's Mission:
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!



June 2021

On Sunday we celebrated the festival of the Holy Spirit – Pentecost. We were reminded of the Spirit's role in our lives – as One who stirs, provokes, prods, comforts, ignites, and so much more. And yes, the Spirit changes us and calls us to new things. We only need to look around to see the Spirit's work in and through the community of faith called Saron. Here are a couple of my observations. You can add your own.

1. We plan to be back in the building, on a limited basis, beginning June 6. Please watch for the details being sent out so you don't miss out. A couple of important things:
   *Worship will be at 10 a.m.
   *Worship will continue simultaneously on Zoom
   *Numbers will be limited…and those limits may change. Pre-registration is necessary
   *There will be no childcare
   *Masks are a must. So is physical distancing by family unit. You must sign in.
   *Things will look and feel different, but we are in this together!

   Yes, that seems like a lot of rules. Yet, we are church. We are called to protect the vulnerable. Council has decided the best way to do that is to open slowly and cautiously.

2. We are getting an intern! How exciting is that!?! Saron has had a rich history of interns and has had had conversations about returning to that tradition and gift. Until now, it has not been possible. Introductions will happen soon, but for now, know that we will be learning from, teaching, and journeying with a candidate for pastoral ministry beginning this Fall. Details to come!

Thank you, Holy Spirit!

Pastor Joan

Caring and Sharing

In Our Prayers –

Richard Schalon is at the Whitcomb Tower Retirement Center, St. Joseph; **Bernice Koski** and **Kathleen Preston** at Woodland Terrace, Bridgman.

Office Hours at Saron (these hours will vary during Covid-19)

Margaret Froehlich (secretary): Mon-Tues, 9 AM - 1 PM
Weds of Newsletter Week, 9 AM - 1 PM
Volunteers: Weds, 9:15 AM - 11 AM (approximately)
Megan Savage (financial secy); Tues & Thurs 5:30 PM
financial@saronlutheran.org

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (983.1273) or contacting the president of the congregation.

Note: E-mails meant for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org. E-mails to Margaret and the church office should be addressed to info@saronlutheran.org.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members in June 2021.

June 2 – Ann Dosch
3 - Steve Hall
4 – June Embree
5 – Judith Huff
6 - Danielle Hohman
7 - Elinor Van Egmond
11 - Tyler Cook
12 - Deborah Vollmer
Cynthia Schmidt
Stephania Ngonyani
Charles Kohs
15 - Hunter Zwar
16 - Marilyn Frey
18 - Rebeccah Strine
James Peterson
19 - Ken Ark
20 - Cami Ashley
22 - Larry Weber
23 – Christopher Cox
24 – Elizabeth Lundgren
26 – Phillip Preston
27 – Bill Teal
Carol Hafer
29 – David Young
30 – Dena Nesbitt

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members In June 2021.

June 1 - Brian and Coanne Hohman
2 - Robert and Deanna Deaton
12 - Scott and Lindsay Gaspari
14 - Gene and June Embree
16 - David and Kathie Bradley
17 - Pastor Gary and Kathy Cowall
Pastor Joan and Jim Oleson
19 - Allen and Diana Dubman
21 – Dan and Suzanne Fortenbacher
25 – Richard and Dawn Osgood
26 – Robert Gulley and Kirsten Talbert
28 - James and Gayle Peterson
30 - William and Janet Oleson
Don and Carol Hafer

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round"

For additions or corrections, please call the church office at 983-1273. Thank you.

Congratulations

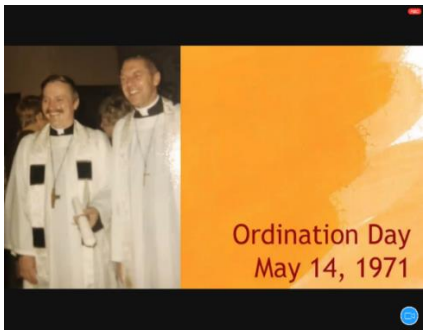
We offer God's blessings to Michelle McBarnes and David Young upon their marriage May 5. Congratulations!

Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord!
Psalm 150:6

We also offer congratulations to Alissa Oleson and Aaron Cohen upon their marriage on April 30th in Boston, MA. Alissa is the daughter of Pastor Joan and Jim.

CONGRATULATIONS AND GOD'S BLESSINGS

We congratulate Pastor Gary Cowall and Kathy upon the 50th anniversary of Pastor Gary's ordination on May 14th. We celebrated this occasion at Saron's worship on May 16th.



FAREWELL AND GODSPEED

On May 16th we offered a blessing of Farewell and Godspeed to Jerry and Ruth Stelling as they move to Colorado Springs, CO after being faithful members of Saron for over 40 years. They look forward to being closer to family.

SARON'S 2021 GRADUATES

Austin Kamala graduated from Xavier University in Cincinnati, OH on May 9. He plans to stay in the Cincinnati area and work for Fidelity. Congratulations, Austin!

Danielle Hohman graduated at the end of April from Michigan State University with a Bachelors of Sciene in Genomics and Molecular Genetics along with Microbiology. This Fall she will be attending Indiana State University to get her Master's Degree in Genetic Counseling. Congratulations to you, Danielle!

We also congratulate Aiden Ashley who graduates from Lakeshore High School in June!

Did you know theology has a role in furniture and its placement? And that sound experts need to be consulted to make sure Saron's acoustics won't be diminished by the choices we make? The Worship Enhancement task force has met with representatives from two furniture companies to discuss various options that would help with layout flexibility and accessibility. We're learning so much but are not yet ready to make any recommendations. This process was always intended to be thoughtfully approached and not rushed. It will be worth the wait!

As of the end of April, we had collected $348,935 towards our 3-year pledge total of $367,205. That's right, we just hit 95%. One month soon, we're going to do a happy dance together because it took all of us joyfully giving to get here and what is more joyous than a celebratory happy dance? Nothing. As always, thank you for being on this journey with us!

Worship

FACEBOOK

We love to share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

Sun. June 6 —
Second Sunday after Pentecost
Genesis 3:8-15
Psalm 130
2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1
Mark 3:20-35

Sun. June 13 —
Third Sunday after Pentecost
Ezekiel 17:22-24
Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15
2 Corinthians 5:6-10-17
Mark 4:26-34

Sun. June 20 —
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
Job 38:1-11
Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32
2 Corinthians 6:1-13
Mark 4:35-41

Sun. June 27 —
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
Lamentations 3:22-33
Psalm 30
2 Corinthians 8:7-15
Mark 5:21-43

Youth

Are you in grades 6-12? Please join us for youth group activities! For more info, contact Scott at *scottgaspari@outlook.com or (Cell) 847-373-8825.*

LEARNING

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

Tuesday Evening Men's Bible Study

Men's Bible Study is starting a new study series titled "By Heart: Conversations with Martin Luther's Small Catechism" by R. Guy Erwin (Author), and others. The study guide costs $15.99 and is available through Augsburg Fortress. The link to the book is https://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/9781506431482/By-Heart-Conversations-with-Martin-Luthers-Small-Catechism

As the Bible says "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

Saron Men's Bible Study meets every Tuesday at 6:00 pm
If you have any questions, or need to location information, feel free to call or text Bob Kynast at 269-921-2786, or Don Hafer at 269-985-3637.
We look forward to seeing you all on Tuesday

Bob Kynast
bobkynast@gmail.com

Men's monthly Bible Devotions and Breakfast

Men's Bible Devotion will meet Saturday, June 5, at 9:00. Contact Dennis Lundgren for Zoom information.

1ST SUNDAY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

We are taking our yearly summer vacation from gathering, but not reading. Here are the 2021-2022 books we have chosen for good discussions starting again in October.

October 3, 2021: ANXIOUS PEOPLE, by Fredrik Backman.
November 7, 2021: SAVE ME THE PLUMS, by Ruth Reichl.
December 5, 2021: THE BOOK OF LOST FRIENDS by Lisa Wingate.
February 13, 2022: RADIUM GIRLS by Kate Moore.
March 6, 2022: 100 DAYS OF HAPPINESS by Fausto Brizzi.
April 3, 2022: FOUR WINDS by Kristen Hannah.
May 1, 2022: THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY by Matt Haig.

Join us for a season of good reads, good discussions and good times simply being together. All are welcome at any session.

"Here's to good books, the cheapest vacation you can buy". (Charlaine Harris)

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Our Thursday study continues into the summer. We will meet in Saron's courtyard on Thursday mornings at 9:30 a.m. The hope is to continue Zoom access for those who would like to join in that way. Let Pastor know if you would like the Zoom info. Our study each week will be on the upcoming Sunday's Gospel lesson. Please bring a lawn chair for seating.

Endowment Committee seeks input

The Endowment Committee is seeking input from the congregation about where it may disburse funds. Criteria includes the needs of each agency, religious organization or individual. The committee disburses funds to three areas:

1. Global: This category includes organizations in the United States or around the world.
2. Local: This category includes organizations in our immediate area, such as the soup kitchen, food pantries, emergency services, etc.
3. Saron: This category includes needs of the church itself.

If you are aware of an organization that is in need of funding, please email Marilyn Frey at marilynhfrey@gmail.com or bobkynast@gmail.com. Funds are disbursed twice a year, and the amount is based on the performance of funds invested with the Berrien Community Foundation and the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust.

Women of the ELCA

Deborah Circle will meet by way of Zoom on Wednesday, June 9, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. Zoom information will be emailed to everyone by Colleen Lundgren. A study will be led by Mary Alice Brunner and will be from the April 2021 issue of Gather magazine, Session Four, page 20, titled Journeys with Angels: feasting, funny, alleluia angels.

Hospitality

Watch for more news as we get closer to getting back together in the building.

Outreach

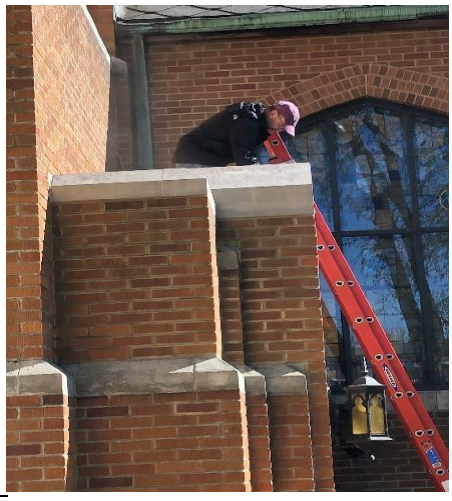
BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

Soup Kitchen volunteers and donors seldom know any of our guests, but they understand one very important thing. It's not about them, it's about helping someone. The Soup Kitchen is here every day to offer a hand up.
A kind word, and a good meal can be of immeasurable value to folks who have little else.

On April 22 80 people enjoyed a sack lunch prepared by four volunteers from Saron. Wendy King, Sue Harris, and Dave & Kathie Bradley prepared & assembled the lunches which included hot dogs, an apple, chips and cookies baked by Kathy Cowall, Deanna Deaton, & Sally Schmuhl.

If you feel comfortable helping to prepare a sack lunch at the Soup Kitchen, baking cookies, or have any questions please contact Kathie Bradley (269-921-4665)
Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, & prayers. During this pandemic it is even more important to continue Saron's mission of *Joyfully sharing God's love for all*

Thanks to all who helped with this year's outdoor spring cleanup.



INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

Thank you to all who filled out the task force's recent survey. The results were overwhelmingly positive in its acceptance of the proposed statement of welcome and affirmation. (See below.) With that in mind, our conversations will continue with how best to extend that welcome to the LGBTQIA community as well as the many whom we name in our proposed welcome statement.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call any one of the task force members, as listed here.

Connor Ashley cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek 269/470-6062 mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks 517/930-0579 lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel 269/313-4062 kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church, N/WLM Synod) 231/670-0328 dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pastor Joan Oleson 269/983-1273
oleson@saronlutheran.org

Here is Saron's proposed Welcome Statement, as affirmed by the council.
"As a community of faith who joyfully shares God's love for all, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome."

HEALING THE TRAUMA OF RACISM

Through a partnership with Spectrum Health Lakeland, Lake Michigan College, and the City of St. Joseph, Community Grand Rounds will be offering a panel discussion entitled -

Hidden History: Understanding the Origins of Racial Inequity - The Struggle for Civil Rights and Beyond 1900s to present

This panel will feature a discussion of pre-World War II race relations which simmered uncomfortably across the nation with notable, and some little-known, incidents. Topics include:

1. Black Professionals on the Frontline the of Democratic Struggle in Grand Rapids, Michigan
2. The Tulsa Race Riot, 100th anniversary
3. Police practices and the rise of white supremacy; militarization of police and their infiltration by white supremacists and militia groups

June 15, 2021 from 7-8:30 via Zoom. Pre-registration is required.

Registration
Link: https://lakemichigancollege.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3jinpehPSq6I6Bf1Piz2hw

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend their meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity. We hope this discussion will advance that goal by enriching our appreciation for our shared humanity.

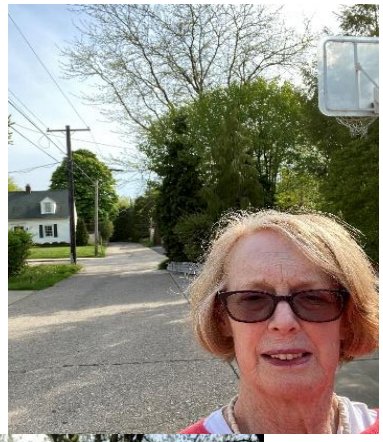
Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath - June 4th-6th, 2021

The first week of June is commemorated as Gun Violence Awareness Week; June 4th-6th is celebrated in faith communities around the US as Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath — a time to mourn those whose lives have been lost to gun violence and to recommit to building communities of peace and safety.

Interfaith Action has created an interfaith resource packet that you and your faith community may use each of the weeks preceding June 6th. These inserts contain messaging and prayers for gun violence reduction, and a reminder for everyone to **wear orange** on that day.

CROP WALK

Thanks to all who supported our Saron walkers. Next month we will offer the total number of dollars raised. This year's (known) walkers were Karen Johnson and Pastor Joan. While the walk was considered a virtual one, both Karen and Pastor Joan logged lots of steps. Your support helped a number of local agencies.



Support

Tax Incentives during the Covid-19 Pandemic

"Above-the-line" tax deduction for charitable contributions

The federal government recently passed legislation to provide financial relief to families as a result of Covid-19. As part of the CARES Act, for the purpose of increasing the work of charitable organizations, individual taxpayers will receive new tax incentives for making charitable donations. The provision encourages individuals to contribute to religious, charitable, and educational organizations by creating a new "above-the-line" deduction (i.e. for taxpayers who take the standard deduction). This deduction permits deduction of up to $300 of annual monetary contributions.

This is applicable for tax years beginning after 2019, and does not sunset after 2020. A related provision increases the limitations on deductions for charitable contributions by individuals who do itemize. For those individuals, the 50% of adjusted gross income limitation is suspended for cash contributions made in 2020.

For members over 72 years old drawing income from an IRA, the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) is waived for 2020, thereby reducing your tax burden.

Effective January 1, 2020, the CARES Act waived RMDs for defined contribution 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans, governmental 457(b) plans, and IRAs for calendar year 2020. The waiver applies to RMDs to be made in 2020 and to 2019 RMDs that were due by April 1, 2020 (if not already made in 2019). The good news is that Qualified Charitable Distributions can still be made directly from an IRA account to the church that will both benefit our ministry and reduce the member's taxable income. As always, members are advised to check with their tax advisor for the latest information and interpretations before filing.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey to receive more information. Thanks! Joe Ulrey josephulrey@yahoo.com

The Synod Assembly – North/West Lower Michigan Synod

Synod Assembly 2021

May 15, 2021

The 2021 Synod Assembly took place virtually on May 15, 2021. Due to Covid-19 restrictions two electronic systems were used. Zoom was used for dialog amongst the participants and Vevo was used for tallying the voting results.

191 delegates attended the assembly of which 77 were clergy and114 were lay persons. The quorum for the meeting was 96 participants.

1. The national ELCA has made certain changes in both the By-Laws and the Constitution which will make each of them match the ELCA model documents. The changes in the By-laws were approved as were the changes in the Constitution.
2. Compensations Guidelines – We voted to recommend increases in compensation of 2% on top of base salaries,
3. General Election – We needed to vote for a number of people to take on various jobs in the synod. The list is long but the following are some you might find interesting.
    a. Synod Secretary – Dennis Smith
    b. Young Adult in Synod – Connor Ashley
    c. Discipline Committee – Connor Ashley
    d. 2022 – Church Wide Assembly – Connor Ashley
4. Budget
    a. The Budget is in good shape
    b. Reduced expenses by reducing travel
    c. Investments are doing well
    d. 86% of the expenses are for support, and 14% is for internal expense.
    e. There is a goal to maintain the fund balance at 15% of the budget.
    f. The current budget year is referred to as the 2022 budget year because it runs to the end of January 2022.
    g. Basic budget
        i. Current 2021-2022 Budget - $1,333, 836
        ii. Proposed 2022-2123 Budget - $1,402,312

Submitted by Bob Kynast and Deanna Deaton, Saron's voting members to the assembly

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

June 2021

June 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study	**2** Pastor Joan at Internship Supervisor training (Zoom)	**3** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study will meet in Saron's Courtyard; also by Zoom (Pastor at training)	**4**	5 9:00 a.m. Men's Bible Devotion Meeting Via Zoom
6 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom and limited In-The-Building	**7** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**8** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study	**9** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee 7:00 p.m. Deborah Circle Meeting by Via Zoom	**10** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study will meet in Saron's Courtyard; also by Zoom	**11**	12
13 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom and limited In-The-Building *Confirmation and Baptism*	**14** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 6:00 p.m. Support Comm. Via Zoom Newsletter Articles due	**15** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study	**16** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee	**17** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study will meet in Saron's Courtyard; also by Zoom	**18**	19
20 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom and limited In-The-Building	**21** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 7:00 p.m. Church Council Meeting	**22** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study	**23** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee	**24** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study will meet in Saron's Courtyard; also by Zoom	**25**	26
27 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom and limited In-The-Building	**28** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**29** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study	**30** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee			